

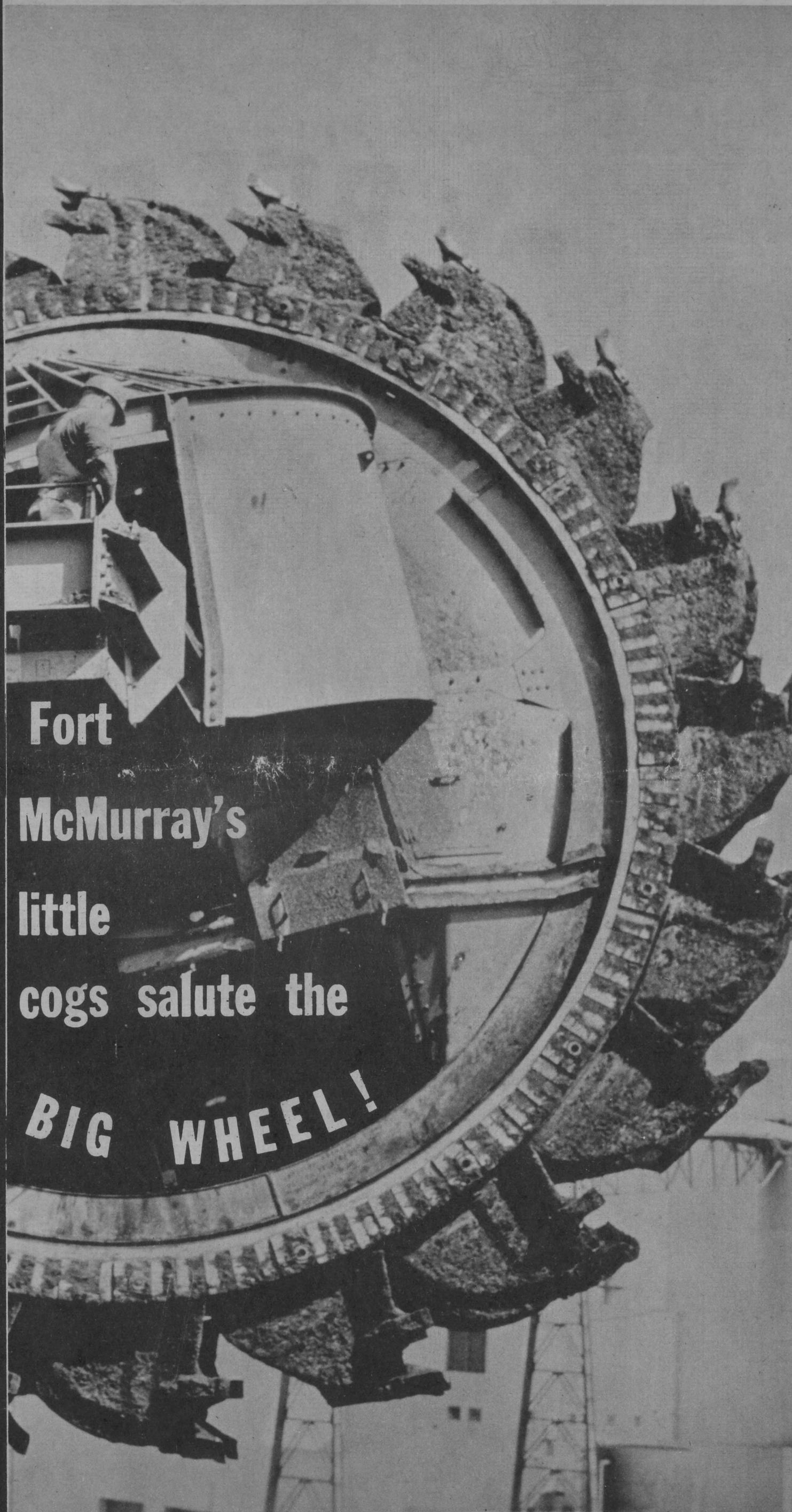


the Fort McMurray, Alberta

# northern★star

VOL. 1 NO. 1  
SEPTEMBER 28,  
1967  
TEN CENTS

Fort  
McMurray's  
little  
cogs salute the  
*BIG WHEEL!*





# Merchants seek clean-up drive

Look for an early "clean-up" campaign in Fort McMurray.

Merchants and community groups such as the Kinsmen Club are thinking in terms of a multi-pronged program which would involve:

- Pressure on the town administration for stepped up garbage collection service.

Fort McMurray currently has only one garbage truck serving a community with a population of roughly 4,000. Net result: Dog-scattered and wind-strewn refuse is becoming a major problem.

Merchants in a major shopping complex told The Northern Star:

"We've gone for as long as three weeks without a garbage collection. The town simply can't operate with a single disposal vehicle. Even twice-weekly service, though it would be welcomed, wouldn't be adequate. In the commercial areas, daily service is needed. Otherwise, the town will begin looking like a public dump."

- A litter basket program.

It has been suggested that the town administration and merchants co-operate in a program under which litter baskets, mounted on available utility posts or otherwise placed in strategic positions, would contribute greatly to an anti-litter campaign.

A prominent member of the Kinsmen Club told FP: "There's a chance that the Kinsmen, in

conjunction with other town organizations and with the support of merchants and the town administration, would be willing to spearhead such a program."

"We're obviously going to have to do something about cleaning up the town," he said, "so perhaps we should start now, before the problem gets out of hand."

- Pressure for a relaxation of regulations dealing with the disposal of disused property.

The Northern Star has been told that it's "virtually impossible" for property owners to move or raze and burn aged and abandoned buildings without obtaining permits.

One developer who solved the problem of a decrepit shack on his property in the obvious way—he threw a match into it—said:

"The shack in question was being used for evil purposes. In addition, it was an eyesore. When I inquired at the town office I was told that I would have to have a permit to have it hauled away. When I inquired about burning it down I was told that I would have to get a permit or pay a fine. Rather than go through the misery and delay of obtaining a removal or burning permit, I set fire to it without benefit of a permit and subsequently paid the fine."

- Weed control.

Fort McMurray merchants say that the town needs regulations

under which property owners

would be required to keep their vacant lands clear of noxious

growth.

They do point out, however, that this is a relatively-minor

problem, with concern generally centering on garbage collection services.

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# An (Editorial) Advertisement

This is the first edition of The Northern Star, Fort McMurray's own newspaper.

The Northern Star comes into being as a result of an informal agreement between the Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce and the Northern Star Publishing Co. Ltd.

Reflecting the wishes of the community, the Chamber several months ago let it be known within the Alberta publishing industry that the citizens of Fort McMurray desired a newspaper, and that the town's business and professional fraternities would actively assist a local publishing venture through advertising expenditure.

Among interested groups which met with—and submitted proposals to—the Chamber, was Northern Star Publishing Co. Ltd., representing a corporate partnership involving principals of two established Alberta publishing operations—Metropolitan Printing Co. Ltd., Edmonton, and Era Publications Ltd., Calgary.

Edward Romaine, President of Era Publications Ltd., is president of Northern Star Publishing and Keith Randolph, president of Metropolitan Printing, is Vice-President and General Manager.

Both are well known in Fort McMurray, the former through his association with Akron Developments Ltd., which developed Fort McMurray's Alberta Building, and the latter through Metropolitan's position as a leading printing house serving Edmonton and Northern Alberta.

The partnership is, in our opinion, a logical and sound one. Era represents experience in the editorial field; Metropolitan experience—and CAPABILITY—in the printing field.

The emphasis is on capability.

We have been asked by a member of our Fort McMurray friends and sponsors, why The Northern Star is being printed in Edmonton.

The answer is a very simple one.

Good printing requires good equipment. Good equipment costs a good deal of money. And good economics dictate that good equipment, if it is to pay for itself, must be used a good deal of the time.

In short, The Northern Star, in order to give Fort McMurray a quality paper with, — and this is important — quality reproduction, chose to print its product on "offset" as opposed to the antiquated (where modern weekly papers are concerned) "letterpress" equipment. Since Fort McMurray is not large enough, where printing requirements are concerned to support an offset printing operation, and since Fort McMurray is now within very easy reach of Edmonton, we felt that we could safely print our paper in Edmonton, offering superior printing as a balm for soothing the pain of bruised local pride.

This is not to suggest that The Northern Star is any way an "outside" operation. On the contrary. It's very much a local product.

Within the next few weeks Fort McMurray's "residential roll" will include editorial, circulation, advertising and printing personnel of The Northern Star. Arrangements for the opening of an office — this will be in the Peter Pond Shopping Centre — are being worked out; staff is being recruited; and all of the other details involved in the complex business of setting up a newspaper are being taken care of.

The Northern Star, like Fort McMurray itself, is of course, having growing pains. Like the average McMurrayite, we are having trouble finding good living space. Like the average McMurrayite, we are feeling the impact of high prices. And like the average McMurrayite, we are tired of mud, sick of dust; and terribly impatient with the pace of development

## For Ourselves

of streets, utility services, and of the other amenities of what is generally referred to as "civilized living."

At the same time, The Northern Star, like its readers, knows that it's on the ground floor of something really big.

As we say in Fort McMurray, "Franklin Avenue wasn't built in a day."

Now that we're introduced, let's get down to brass tacks.

The Northern Star, with an initial circulation of about 3,000 will appear every two weeks the next month and then switch to weekly publishing. For these few weeks everyone who has a postal box in Fort McMurray will receive copies free; everyone else will have to buy — at a cost of 10 cents.

This isn't discriminatory. The Fort McMurray merchants who will be handling sales are entitled to a small profit on sales, particularly since it's their advertising revenue that is making this publication possible. After a few weeks of operation — once we get the kinks out of our legs — we'll be going after the postal box holder for annual subscriptions. Then, the home subscriber will be paying his share. It's an equitable arrangement. As we say here in Fort McMurray, "It all comes out in the wash."

The Northern Star has temporary quarters in the Peter Pond Hotel, to which mailed or hand delivered editorial, circulation, and advertising material may be sent. It should be addressed to: THE EDITOR, THE NORTHERN STAR, PETER POND HOTEL, FORT McMURRAY, ALBERTA.

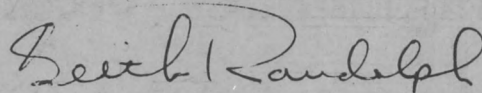
For the next few weeks, the performance of The Northern Star will be rather informal.

For example—though we are a weekly newspaper, our next issue won't appear until mid-October. The reason: we moved a little faster than had been originally intended, in order to appear in print before the G.C.O.S. plant opening. This was done at the suggestion of the Chamber of Commerce and community leaders, who felt that Fort McMurray should have a paper ready and waiting for the brass when it arrived. We agreed; hence pre-opening distribution coupled with re-organization of original printing schedules makes an immediate weekly schedule impractical.

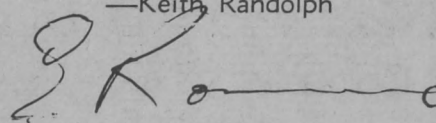
Then, too, editorial content leaves much to be desired. Quite frankly, this newspaper, on the basis of editorial content in the opening issue, isn't going to win a Pulitzer prize, unless the Pulitzer Prize people introduce a category entitled "for the highest ratio of advertising in relation to news." But everyone knows that advertising is the life's blood of the newspaper business, so we won't apologize. We'll merely say to the merchants and professional people who have supported us so generously: You've given Fort McMurray its own newspaper."

And to the reader, we'll say: "Bear with us and we'll soon be giving you a paper that you'll be proud of."

After you, Keith.



—Keith Randolph



Edward Romaine

the Fort McMurray, Alberta

# northern★star

## "Fort McMurray's Own Newspaper"



# PETER POND'S PATTERN

Well, we've only been around a few days but already we've solved Fort McMurray's foremost mystery — the identity of the leading character in "The Case of the Muddled Madman."

For those who are hard of hearing or don't have neighbors who gossip, this is the background.

McMurray residents strolling along Franklin Avenue in last Saturday evening's light drizzle (you couldn't call it a rain, as we only got about two inches in three hours), were treated to an amazing sight.

There, in a churned-up field, and only a few feet from the sidewalk, was a truly pathetic figure — a man, in his late thirties, kneeling in the mud, sobbing, and occasionally calling out (incoherently, it first appears) to passersby.

He apparently stayed put for two hours and then staggered back toward the Peter Pond Shopping Centre, eventually reaching the pavement of the newly-completed parking lot.

(To digress for a moment, Lloyd J. Harris, President of Chartered Investments Ltd., subsequently told us that he had to bring in a grader to clear off the mud left by the mysterious stranger on his sojourn from the edge of the parking lot into the hotel door.)

At any rate, we all know there's nothing unusual about a man bogging down in the mud in Fort McMurray and having to ask for a hand out. But this fellow was different. A number of kindly folks ventured out on rescue missions but didn't get so much as a thank-you for ruining their shoes. The stranger merely waved them back, sobbing, "No! No! Please! I want s'm nooz."

The children watching the performance were absolutely amazed. They took one look, listened to the stranger's babbling, and then dashed home to tell their mothers about the "man who likes to sleep in mud." At least one youngster that we know of—young Philip Arlington-Smythe (his father's an immigrant engineer who works down at the GCOS plant)—used his eyewitness report as a ploy through which he escaped a badly-needed thrashing. After he got through telling his mother about the stranger, she closed her eyes, rubbed her forehead, and said, "Okay, Philip! Don't tell me any more! Just climb into the washer!"

The reaction among other adults varied greatly.

Some of the older male observers—men who worked in the mines before coming to McMurray—thought the stranger was a "snooze" addict and set out to find some snuff. Needless to say, they weren't aided in their fruitless search by Mrs. Estella Faith Crecklington, the charter president of the McMurray Chapter of the Anti-Tobacco and Clean Air League. Mrs. Crecklington (she's a widow, whose husband died in the Boer War), took one look at the stranger, raised her nose into the air, and addressed the gathering as follows:

"Loathsome! Positively loathsome! Some people are so addicted to tobacco that they'll sink to almost any level to get it." With that, she stepped out into the street and sank out of sight in the muddy road leading to the liquor store in the Alberta Building.

The middle-aged types—among them Bob Gordon, manager of the Peter Pond Hotel; Al Campbell, who owns the Riviera; Chris den Ouden, just to name a few—were sure that the stranger merely wanted a drink, and they offered him one. Still he refused. Ed O'Neill, who runs the Imperial Station and the theatre, then moved in and tried an old military tactic—surround and destroy. He alternately offered to tow the man out with his truck (and in a burst of generosity—bless his Irish heart—he offered the service at "the Edmonton rate") and/or carry him out by hand and let him sit through two showings of "The Great Train Robbery" for the price of one. It was still no.

Then there were the hippies. They thought the stranger was on glue. A couple of them hauled in a gallon or so, poured some out in a saucer, and held it under the stranger's nose. The two clearly-unshaven young men who ventured out into the mud (they had nothing to lose, since neither of them was wearing shoes) stepped back smartly when the stranger, in a rare display of coherence, shouted, "May the fleas of a thousand camels nest in your fathers' beards!" (that's an old Arabic curse). The Good Samaritans drifted off, one of them muttering, "Okay, that does it, man! You don't get invited to one of our parties again!"

And, yes. There were the transient ladies from Edmonton! They thought the whole pathetic business was a riot. They laughed until the tears washed the mascara down their cheeks. And when their funnybones ceased tickling, they wandered off towards the bright lights, one remarking to the other: "Can you imagine a man doing a thing like that! Just think of what he's doing to his reputation!"

Well, so much for the background.

Upon hearing of this incident, we decided to investigate. We got wind of it the morning after it occurred, and while a hot sun was turning last night's sea of mud into today's cloud of dust, we made our way to the Peter Pond Hotel. A few inquiries later and we were escorted into a room. There, in a bed surrounded by hot water bottles, was the stranger. He was being attended by two doctors. One was treating him for pneu-

monia, caused by exposure during the previous evening; the other for heat stroke and asphyxia, the former caused by a combination of a 90-degree temperature and the hot water bottles, and the latter by the dust that was by this time swirling around the town.

To make a long story short, this is what happened. When we asked the stranger who he was he said he was the editor of The Northern Star, and he explained his performance of the previous evening in this way:

"Newspapers," he intoned, in a way that only newspapermen can intone, "need news in the same way that can skinnners need a hill to cut down to size and in the way that Mrs. Crecklington, that fine old lady who was heading toward the Alberta building needs . . . well . . . you know what I mean. Now I've been here for a couple of weeks, and in that time I haven't had much in the way of nooz. What we have to have is s'm nooz. I was out of my head the other night but I'm okay now. The docs here have been pumping the local gossip into me pretty good."

The stranger left the hospital a couple of days after we saw him, and he was in good shape. After we had carried him to the airport hotel and deposited him in the Pacific Western Airlines plane (Morris Huculuk, the PWA agent carried his feet), he turned toward me and said:

"Pete, I want you to do something for me. Then he handed me a note. Before I could look at it, he said, "Write it in your column—just as a favor to me."

The note?

Well, it says: "I'd like to thank all of the folks in Fort McMurray for giving me s'm nooz when I needed it most. And tell 'em that if they keep pouring the stuff into me—journalistically speaking, that is—I'll be okay and there won't be a repetition of the other night's performance."

You can write to the editor in care of the Peter Pond Hotel, Fort McMurray.

*P. Pond*  
V. S. T. T.

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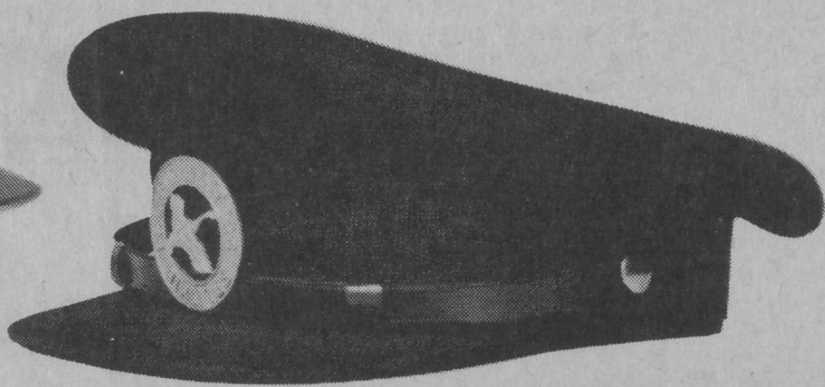
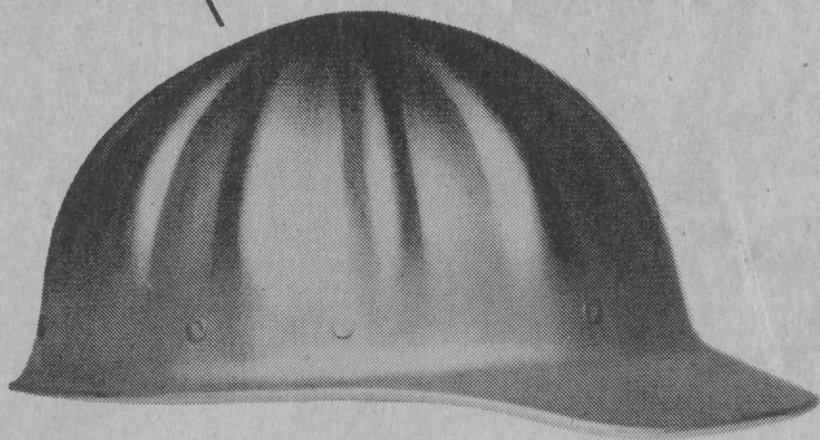
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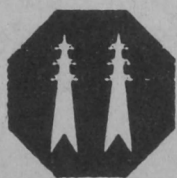
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and to

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## advances on schedule

The Cigas underground propane service program is moving along on schedule, with Cigas Products Ltd.'s Fort McMurray Manager, B. C. (Burt) Witham, reporting that more than 400 service connections have been completed since the project got underway.

Now being served by central tank supply through a gridwork of three-inch and four-inch mains leading from the central supply installation into the residential area known as Block X are 240 Athabasca Realty Ltd. homes, 80 A.R.L. duplexes, 185 A.R.L. trailers, 40 independent homes, the new General Hospital, and 40 low-rental housing units.

Mr. Witham told The Northern Star that the system will eventually encompass more than 650 residential units, along with several major projects such as the Peter Pond Shopping Centre and the Peter Pond Hotel complex.

Bad weather has interfered with work in recent days, following rapid late spring and summer progress, but Mr. Witham said, "we anticipate a good deal of additional headway before winter sets in."

The Cigas installation is designed for easy conversion to natural gas should a supply become available.

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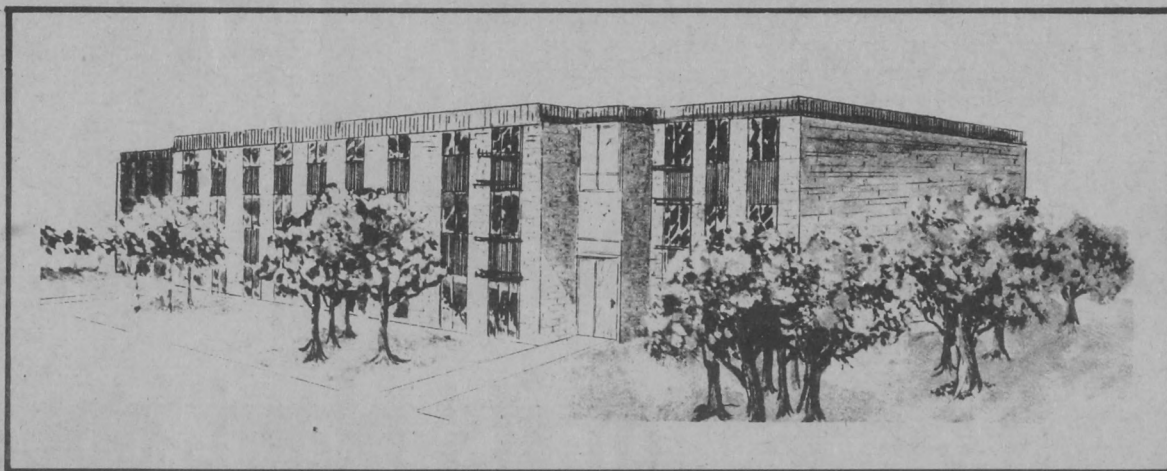
**Fort McMurray**

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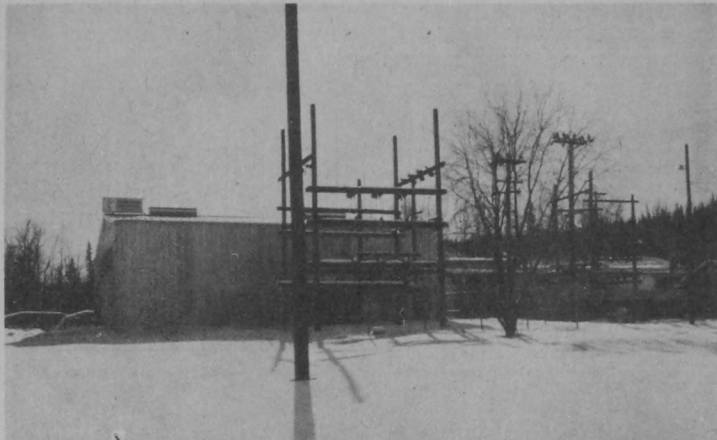
VINCE BURKE, MANAGER

Fort McMurray

Phone 743-3327



The Fort McMurray plant as it was in December, 1957.



Fort McMurray power plant as it looks today

By BOB DUNCAN

The Fort McMurray Power Company Limited is now united directly with its parent company, and is now known as Canadian Utilities, Limited. What is the history of this interesting segment of C.U.L.'s operations?

The first commercial power generating plant was installed in Waterways in 1933 and was operated by a Mr. McNeil with power from a 10 KW Lister 110/220 volt unit. Mr. McNeil sold to a Mr. Boisvert, a storekeeper. He supplied only evening power (from dusk until midnight), with one exception—day service for the traditional Monday wash.

In 1937, Mr. J. Durocher sold a power plant he operated in Lac La Biche and started one in Fort

McMurray, installing a one-cylinder Blackstone semi-diesel 25 KW unit. C.U.L. still has this plant, retaining it for the Fort McMurray museum). He put in a small 2,300 volt single-phase system and charged 25c per KW on an evening schedule. Today's rates represent a "modest" 90% reduction from that original figure.

In 1940, Mr. Duracher built a plant at a new location, where C.U.L. facilities are located today, on the Hangingstone River, about mid-way between Fort McMurray and Waterways. This was a log building, as were all the previous plants.

With the arrival of the American army in 1942 and with good co-operative planning, a three-phase line was built between the power plant and Fort McMurray and Waterways. A 170 KW three-cylinder Fairbanks unit was installed with a 40 KW Vivian.

In 1954 J. Durocher sold out to G. Sandulac who operated the business for three years, increasing the generating capacity by a 90 KW Murphy unit removed from a Fort McMurray salt plant which had closed.

In 1957 the McMurray Light and Power Co. Ltd., was purchased from Mr. Sandulac by Canadian Utilities and operated with a peak of 90 KW and approximately 157 customers. Mr. Sandulac today operates the El Paso Motel in Edmonton.

Over the years C.U.L. customers grew to 1,100 and company plant capacity to 4,475 KW. The old log building was replaced and three additions to the main building were subsequently added.

A three-phase 25 KV line was built to serve the airport and a 13.8 line, 32 miles to Anzac to serve that settlement.

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# Underground Service

Mid-October will mark the completion of the second phase of a three-year program by Canadian Utilities, Limited, to provide underground electric service to the Poplar Grove and Spruce Grove areas of Fort McMurray. Final phase of the system is to be completed in 1968. The system will supply 650 homes as well as apartments and institutions in the area.

In addition, the residential area and the main thoroughfare—(Franklin Avenue)—will boast up-to-date street lighting from 200 modern steel standards fed by the underground system.

Canadian Utilities is doing the work for the developers, Athabasca Realty Company Limited (holding company for G.C.O.S.), who did not wish to mar the aesthetic value of Fort McMurray's wilderness setting with overhead lines and poles. Consequently, they are sharing in the cost of underground power and telephone lines.

First phase of the system, completed last year, provided service to 91 home sites in the area immediately west of Hospital Street. The phase to be completed by mid-October includes the rest of Poplar Grove (321 homes) and the area immediately east of Hospital Street, to hospital and school sites. The third phase will be completed in 1968 to cover the remainder of Birch Grove (238 homes).

Modern technology played an important role in planning the system for efficient operation,

future load increase, safety and long life.

Feeder lines in the system will operate at 14,400 volts. This was made possible by development of a new plastic insulation. The system is one of the first projects in Alberta to employ this type of cable in an underground residential system. Feeder lines are also looped, allowing for an alternate power source in case of damage to the cables. Approximately 40 miles of underground cable is being buried four feet under the surface in a trench also used for the underground telephone system.

The underground nature of the system provides increased safety and longer life as the cable will not be susceptible to as many problems or dangers as wire exposed to the elements.

The system has also been designed to allow for projected load increases for up to 30 years, eliminating the necessity of digging up the lines except for emergency repairs. Attention to aesthetic values was also planned in placing transformers. Low silhouette models were used and placed in utility lanes at the rear of residences. They are totally enclosed in tamper-proof containers mounted on cement pads.

Canadian Utilities officials report they received excellent co-operation from town officials and other companies involved in co-ordinating the installation of electric service with installation of other services such as telephone, water, sewer, gas and road construction.

**Congratulations to G.C.O.S., one of our leading clients!**

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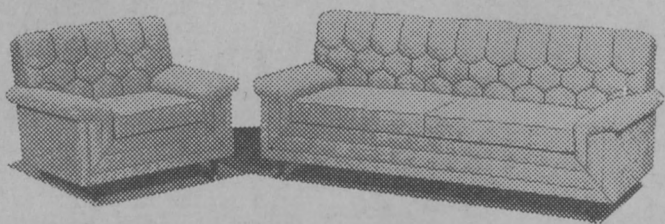


**A bit of history:** Fort McMurray's historic mission church is scheduled to be transferred to the community's Centennial Park. In the interim, it sits behind St. John the Baptist Church, which in turn fronts on Franklin Avenue, in downtown Fort McMurray.

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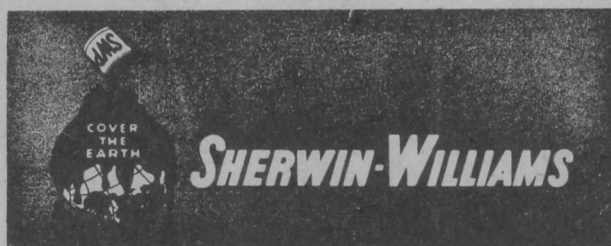
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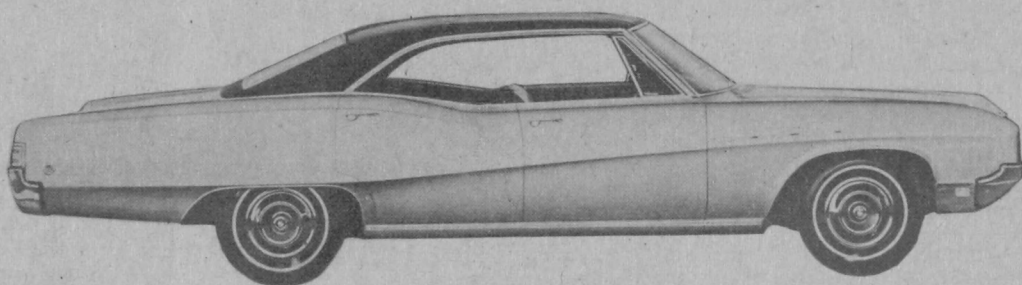
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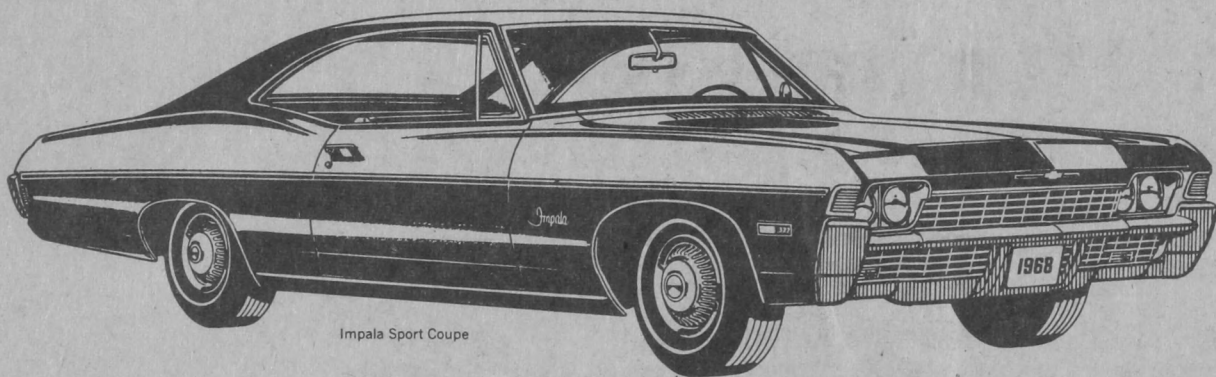
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# NAR NEAR END OF SERVICE UPGRADING

The Northern Alberta Railways, and its predecessor, the Alberta Great Waterways, have served Fort McMurray for 45 years. The history of this line from Edmonton to the then-far-north reflects the financial perils early railway builders encountered.

In February of 1909, a provincial charter was granted to the Alberta & Great Waterways Railway for construction of a line to Waterways, at the junction of the Clearwater and Athabasca rivers, from which navigable water to the MacKenzie River system existed. Because of subsequent disputes and litigation, however, the original incorporators of the company were unable to continue construction. In 1913, by mutual consent of the government and the company, control was acquired by J. D. McArthur, Winnipeg, who was building a railway projected to run from Edmonton to Dunvegan Landing in Alberta, and then to Fort George (now Prince George, B.C.) This railway was known as the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia. Construction of the Waterways line started from Carbondale in 1914 and was completed to Lac Le Biche in July, 1916. It was completed to Draper in 1922, and to the present terminus at Waterways in 1925.

The J. D. McArthur Company ran into financial difficulty during construction and, eventually, the provincial government became the outright owners of the Alberta & Great Waterways. The govern-

ment also accepted responsibility for the other railways then building into the north and which were also in difficulty.

These problems were eventually resolved in 1929 when the Alberta & Great Waterways, the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia, the Central Canada and the Pembina Valley railways were sold to Canadian Pacific and Canadian National — each company putting up 50% of the purchase capital. The lines were merged into the Northern Alberta Railways Company. Since 1929, N.A.R. has been operated as a separate corporate entity, with headquarters in Edmonton and the board of directors (consisting of an equal number of senior officers from both parent companies) functioning from Montreal.

For many years the line to Waterways, did not prosper. Population in the area was small and no solid base of year round traffic occurred. During World War II, the building of the Canol Pipe Line resulted in substantial traffic moving north through Waterways and, following the war, mining developments in the north and the establishment of the Northern Transportation Company based at Fort McMurray produced a reasonable amount of traffic during the summer months. However, during the winter months only minimum demands were made on the line.

Despite this, however, an extensive upgrading program was

initiated in 1959—the overall cost of which was calculated to be \$12,000,000. Except for the replacing of 100 miles of light with heavy rail, which will cost \$3,000,000, this upgrading is completed, thus enabling the N.A.R. to meet the demands made upon its Waterways line by the tremendous upsurge in traffic which occurred as a result of the construction of the Great Canadian

Oil Sands plant. Until 1966, N.A.R. was the only means of land transport into Fort McMurray, and the company is proud of the fact that it handled without mishap or delay construction materials in connection with the building of the plant to the extent of 135,000 tons together with 40,000 tons of other material used in the development of Fort McMurray

itself. Some of this material was of a type seldom seen in Canada, let alone in the north. Loads of tremendous weight, high centres of gravity, and great size poured into Fort McMurray on schedule day after day in the two years of major construction which followed the commencement of the G.C.O.S. project.

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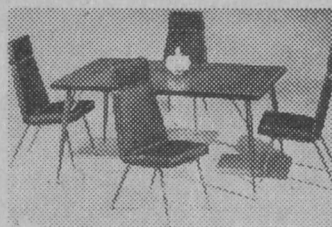
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# History of oil sands project

## WHAT IS THE GEOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE TAR SANDS

Some geologists think the oil in the Athabasca sands originated in the Devonian reef to the west of the McMurray area and migrated upward into the present deposit. Others believe the oil originated from marine life deposited with sand near the shoreline on the bottom of a huge inland sea which existed when the climate of the area was tropical or sub-tropical in nature.

Both sides agree that the lighter, more volatile components of the oil have escaped through the surface of the earth over time, leaving behind the heavier components, or bitumen, which is characteristic of the tar sands sand area.

It is estimated that the Athabasca tar sands underlie an area of some 30,000 square miles, or a little larger than Lake Michigan.

## ESTIMATES OF RESERVES

The estimated amount of oil in the Athabasca deposit is about 600 billion barrels. Oil men agree that, with the exception of shale oil, the accumulation is the greatest known anywhere on earth.

A generally-accepted figure of 300 billion barrels of physically recoverable oil was given stature late in 1963 by the Alberta Oil and Gas Conservation Board.

The Board estimated that all tar sands in Canada (including Athabasca) hold an estimated 710 billion barrels, with 415 billion of unprocessed tar to be recovered and 303 billion barrels of oil to be the final product after processing.

On this basis, final recovery from the Athabasca deposit alone would push the 300 billion barrel mark.

The immensity of this quantity is shown by the fact that it is enough to supply the entire North American continent for more than 60 years on the basis of today's demand for oil.

## EARLY HISTORY OF EXPLORATION

Existence of the tar sands was first recorded by Peter Pond, adventurer, fur trader and explorer, in 1778.

At the junction of the Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers, where Fort McMurray later was established, he found Indians using a sticky substance, oozing from the river banks, to waterproof their canoes. The name "tar sands" was given to it then, but oil men later recognized the bitumen in the sands as a heavy crude oil.

It was about a century after Pond that the Geological Survey of Canada, in 1875, instituted plans for a survey. Various tests through the years proved more and more oil in place, but its thick gummy nature led generally toward experiments in using it as a paving material.

There are today in Edmonton streets which were paved with oil sands in 1915 and which, with only minor repairs in the interim are still in good condition.

About 2,200 test holes have been drilled in various parts of the Athabasca deposit since the first one in 1897 by the Geological Survey, and experiments have been made at an increasing rate. But problems have almost matched the size of the reserves.

They include the extreme wather and the remoteness of the area, the handling and dis-

posal of the huge amounts of overburden and the mining of the oil-laden sand underneath it.

Also, there has been the problem of separating the oil from the sand in sufficient quantities to be economic, and processing the heavy raw product to make it sufficiently fluid for transportation by pipeline and usable as a charge material for conventional refining processes.

## EXPERIMENTS IN SEPARATION

Efforts to solve the puzzle of separating the oil from the sand started many years ago. As early as 1919, when the Alberta Research Council was formed as an arm of the provincial government, steps already had been taken to find a practical separation method.

Underground burning was tried as early as 1929. Various other approaches to in situ (in place) separation have been considered by later experimenters, including atomic blasts.

The early test plants used various hot water separation processes. Among these were a separation plant and refinery near Fort McMurray built by Abasand Oils Ltd., under the leadership of the late Max W. Ball; and one at Bitumount, about 50 miles north of Fort McMurray, built by R. C. Fitzsimmons.

Mr. Fitzsimmons is credited with being the first "commercial developer" of the oil sands. He extracted a few barrels in a small model plant as early as 1925 and, after organizing International Bitumen Company Limited in 1927 and suffering losses of equipment from a forest fire in 1929, built an extraction plant in 1930 from which the first carload of bitumen was shipped.

International Bitumen Company was acquired in 1942 by L. R. Champion, organizer of Oil Sands Limited, which, in collaboration with the Alberta Government, began construction three years later of a 500-tons-per-day capacity plant at Bitumount.

This plant was taken over by the Alberta Government before its completion. It was operated on a test basis in 1948 and then closed in 1949.

This plant led to an analysis, published as the "Blair Report" in December, 1950.

## GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP, POLICY

The Athabasca tar sands were turned over to Alberta by the federal government in 1930.

This move was prompted by years of pressure brought to bear by provincial governments to have full say in the administration of their natural resources.

Alberta had long been interested in the development of the tar sands. At the same time, with the development of conventional production of Alberta crude oil from which the province today receives approximately half of its total revenues, the government has been anxious to prevent any sudden flood of Athabasca oil from disrupting the economy of the Canadian petroleum industry.

In October, 1962, the government announced that as a matter of policy it would limit production from the tar sands to 5 per cent of the province's production by conventional methods, unless tar sands oil in excess of that limit were utilized in new markets not served by oil from Al-

berta's flowing or pumping wells.

Proposals to produce the tar sands are submitted to the Alberta Oil and Gas Conservation Board, which follows a procedure of study, usually including hearings and staff investigations. It then presents its recommendation to the lieutenant governor in council and the government, after its further study, makes the final decision on issuance of the formal permit.

The board has received two applications in addition to the successful proposal of Great Canadian, but has deferred both until Dec. 30, 1968.

The Syncrude group (including Cities Service, Atlantic Richfield Company, Imperial Oil Ltd., and Royalite Oil Company) proposed a \$356 million project based on surface mining operations to recover 100,000 barrels per day.

Shell Canada Ltd.'s plan, estimated to cost \$259 million, is based on an in situ operation involving injection of super-heated steam and a chemical solvent into the sands to emulsify the heavy bitumen to permit its production through wells. Shell's proposal also called for 100,000 barrels per day of production.

Both projects were to require seven to eight years for completion.

## SUN'S ENTRY INTO ATHABASCA

Sun's interest in Athabasca goes back at least as far as 1944, when the late J. Edgar Pew, then vice-president in charge of production, had discussions with L. R. Champion of Oil Sands Ltd. (a forerunner of Great Canadian Oil Sands Ltd., who was seeking funds to build his plant at Bitumount. Sun sent geologists and lawyers to look into the Bitumount properties at that time, but took no action.

Engineers were sent in 1946 by Sun's manufacturing department to investigate the possibilities. They decided that mining and processing of the tar sands would not be economic for perhaps another 20 years.

Sun's interest was aroused, however, and eight years later, in 1954, the company secured a 75 per cent interest in Abasand Oils' Lease No. 86 at Mildred-Ruth Lakes on the west side of the Athabasca River about 20 miles north of Fort McMurray.

While Sun later secured other tar sands leases, Lease No. 86 is the one directly involved in the Great Canadian Oil Sands Limited project as the site of its

plant and source of production.

Covering about 4,000 acres (6.6 square miles), Lease No. 86 (formerly Lease No. 4) is considered one of the choice leases in the tar sands, with a thick tar sand deposit covered by a relatively thin layer of overburden.

## ORIGIN OF G.C.O.S. PROJECT

Great Canadian was incorporated in 1953. It represents an accumulation of experience and know-how dating from before 1930, including the patent on the hot water process developed by R. C. Fitzsimmons, as well as the work of L. R. Champion and Oil Sands Ltd. in collaboration with the Alberta Government.

While both the Fitzsimmons process and the process used by Oil Sands Ltd. employed the hot water principle, they varied in application. The latter process followed procedures developed by the Alberta Research Council under the leadership of the late Dr. Karl A. Clark.

Oil Sands Ltd., and its patents, studies and Lease 14 were acquired in 1953 by GCOS. Mr. Champion for many years continued his interest in the Athabasca development as a substantial stockholder in GCOS.

Dr. Clark, who as a member of the Alberta Research Council has been involved with tar sands developments since 1922, retired from the council and was a consultant to GCOS until his death in December, 1966.

In 1955, GCOS began discussions with the Alberta Government looking toward the preparation of a mutually satisfactory proposal for the development of the tar sands.

In 1960, GCOS made formal application to the Conservation Board for a permit to undertake a commercial project with a capacity of 31,500 barrels per day. Hearings were held, and in November of that year the board recommended to the Government that further consideration of the GCOS application be deferred until June, 1962.

Hearings in mid-1962 on the GCOS request resulted in approval by the Board in September and by the government on Oct. 2, 1962. Thus GCOS became the first company ever to receive permission to produce on a major commercial basis from the giant Athabasca deposit.

It was given until Sept. 30, 1963, to complete financing arrangements; until Jan. 1, 1964, to begin construction; and until Sept. 30, 1966, to start recovery operations.

It also obtained shortly thereafter a permit to construct a pipeline from the lease to Edmonton, to connect with Interprovincial Pipeline.

Meanwhile, Sun had become closely interested in GCOS. A busy year of economic and engineering feasibility studies followed. An engineering technical committee was formed with William H. Davis of Sun as chairman. Canadian Bechtel Limited (Toronto) was engaged to make feasibility studies, and a test plant on the site was completed by the fall of 1963.

As the deadline for financing neared, GCOS on Sept. 25, 1963, filed an application for these amendments: (a) certain process changes; (b) an extension of time for financing; and (c) approval of an increase in volume of synthetic crude recovery from the originally-approved 31,500 barrels per day to 45,000 barrels per day.

The application was accompanied by a letter from Sun President Robert G. Dunlop to Great Canadian, outlining these amendments as conditions under which Sun would invest up to \$67,500,000 of Canadian funds and assist in arranging the additional financing necessary for the \$235,000,000 project.

The board extended the time for GCOS to complete its financing and set Nov. 26 at the date for public hearings. It announced its favorable decision on Feb. 14, 1964, recommending approval of the increase and setting Sept. 1, 1964, as the date for start of construction and Sept. 30, 1967, as the deadline for start of recovery operations. Approval by the government followed on April 10, 1964.

Great Canadian's permit required:

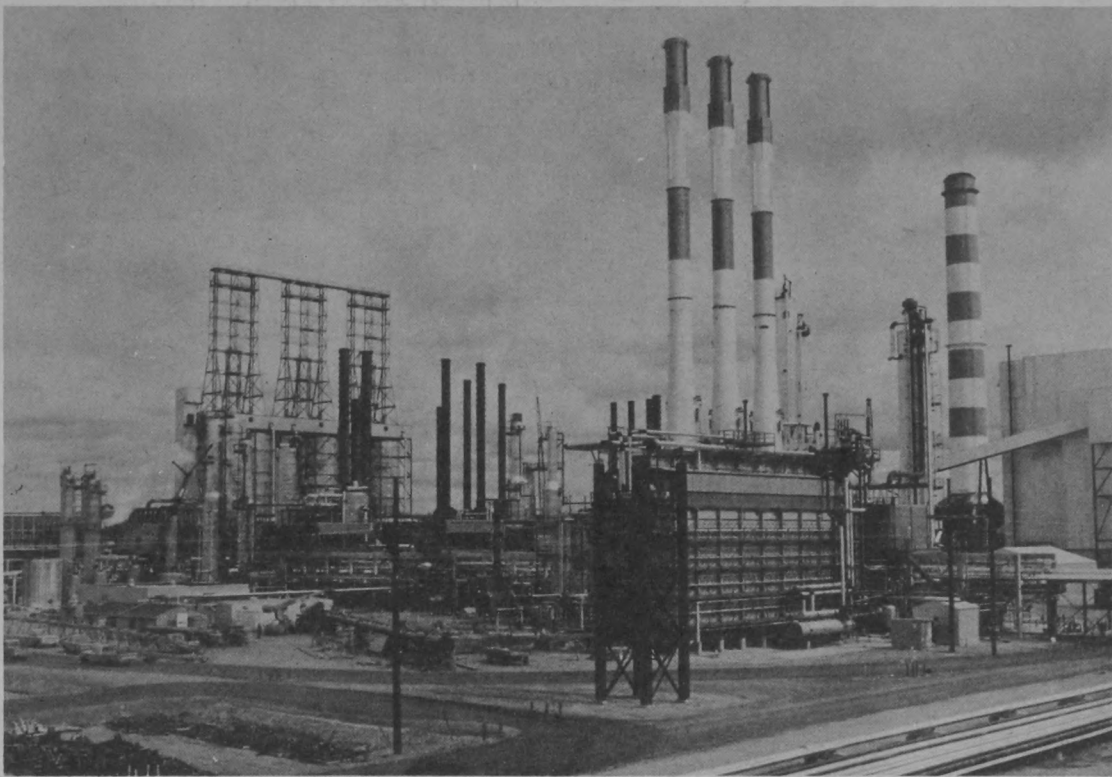
1. That it grant bona fide residents of Alberta an opportunity to purchase an equity in Great Canadian in the form of convertible debentures in the total sum of \$12.5 million bearing interest at the rate of 6 per cent. (This was done in May, 1965.)

2. That it appoint as a director of the company a Canadian citizen living in Alberta, who has been a resident of the province for at least one year. (J. Grant Spratt, of Edmonton, a prominent Alberta petroleum consultant, was elected to the GCOS board of directors in 1964 and has made valuable contributions as a director continuously since that time.)



One of two bucketwheel excavators used to strip mine tar sands at Great Canadian Oil Sands Limited project. Machine is 210 feet long and 12 storeys high.





View of bitumen processing area. Three stacks at right centre rise from reformer furnace which produces hydrogen for treating liquids from coker to remove sulfur, other impurities. Coker drums at left; 350-foot power house stack is at right.

3. That it give preference in employment to residents of Alberta qualified in the professional and technical skills required. (About 85 per cent of the GCOS employees are native Albertans and more than 99 per cent are Canadians.)

4. That it employ local construction labor as far as it was reasonable and practicable to do so. (This was done.)

#### WHAT IS G.C.O.S.

Great Canadian is a Canadian company incorporated under the Dominion Companies Act. Sun Oil Company Limited of Toronto owns an 81.8 per cent interest in GCOS.

The general offices of GCOS are at 85 Bloor Street, E., Toronto 5, Ontario, Canada. Its officers and directors are: W. Harold Rea, chairman; Clarence H. Thayer, director and president; Robert McClements, Jr., director and vice president, operations; Alex E. Barron, director and vice president; Thomas P. Clarke, director and vice president; William H. Davis, director and vice president; Donald J. Wilkins, director and vice president; Ardagh S. Kingsmill, director and secretary; James S. Roe, director and treasurer; Darwin W. Ferguson, director; Robert Law, director; John H. McWilliams, director; J. Grant Spratt, director; Kenneth F. Heddon, vice president; Albert E. Moss, vice president; Joseph R. Layton, comptroller; Donald M. Treadgold, assistant secretary; Maurice B. Parmelee, assistant treasurer; Dudley M. McGreer, assistant treasurer.

From the time GCOS was formed in 1954 to carry on the work and interests of L. R. Champion and Oil Sands Ltd. until the time of the 1960 hearing, funds required by Great Canadian were obtained largely from Canadian investors and to a lesser extent from British sources.

The first official connection of GCOS with Sun Oil Company came with the signing of a contract in 1958 with Sun and Abasand for rights to mine the sand on one-half of Lease No. 86. (Subsequently, rights to mine the entire lease were acquired by GCOS.) Additionally, Sun and Canadian Oil Companies Ltd.

(now Shell) contracted to take 75 and 25 per cent, respectively, of the output of the proposed GCOS plant, then expected to have a capacity of 31,500 barrels per day.

Prior to the 1962 Conservation Board hearing on the GCOS application, GCOS granted an option to Canadian Pacific Oil & Gas Ltd. to acquire up to 51 per cent of GCOS stock, and Canadian Pacific had transferred a one-third interest each in this option to Sun and Canadian Oils. GCOS in accordance with the option agreement submitted a proposal for financing the project. By mid-1963, Canadian Pacific, Sun and Shell (formerly Canadian Oil) dropped out of the option agreement.

Sun later renewed its interest and accepted a proposal by GCOS in September, 1963, to invest up to \$67,500,000 and to assist with other financing required, subject to (a) approval by the board of the increase in capacity to 45,000 barrels per day and other amendments sought by GCOS, (b) increase in Great Canadian's authorized capital from 3,000,000 to 9,000,000 shares, and (c) increase in the size of the GCOS board to 11 members with six to be Sun nominees (subsequently increased to 13 members, with seven to be Sun nominees). Sun also agreed to purchase 75 per cent of the additional 13,500 barrels per day of output requested in the GCOS application.

The Sun-GCOS agreement assured financing of the project, with the Conservation Board declaring in its report to the government:

"The Board regards Sun as a major concern with considerable financial resources and a degree of participation such that it does not have reservations concerning the ability of Great Canadian to finance the project."

#### WHAT THE GCOS PROJECT WILL MEAN TO ALBERTA

The Great Canadian project has already had a strong impact on the economy of Fort McMurray and, indeed, of Alberta.

Employment at the plant and in the offices totals approximately 450. A fluctuating number of contract maintenance and services personnel will repre-

sent an average of some 250 additional people per year.

Payroll costs (including benefits) for the plant operating and maintenance people are estimated to be approximately \$6,800,000 annually.

At the peak of construction in mid-1966, about 2,300 people were employed on the project.

The increase in population for the sparsely settled area has been dramatic. Fort McMurray has jumped from 1,200 people in 1964 to almost 4,000 in mid-1967.

The total direct impact on the Alberta economy will be about \$16 million annually, including payroll, taxes and royalties.

Indirectly, as some Fort McMurray and Alberta leaders have pointed out, a new project of this size will give rise to new and expanded businesses and services ranging from air transport and barbering through schools and waterworks.

#### ENOUGH RESERVES FOR DECADES

The lease on which the GCOS plant is located, though only about 4,000 acres or 6.6 square miles in extent, has reserves capable of yielding a total of about 490 million barrels of synthetic crude, or enough to supply the project at its approved rate of production for nearly 30 years.

Sun has leases totalling almost 165,000 acres in the Athabasca tar sands as a whole.

#### EXCAVATORS HAVE BIG APPETITES

The GCOS answer to mining the sand lies in the use of two huge, crawler-mounted, bucket-wheel excavators manufactured in Germany.

These excavators have ten buckets or scoops mounted on the outer rim of a large wheel. As the wheel turns at a speed of 7.5 revolutions a minute, each of the buckets comes into contact with the face of the tar sands and digs as much as two tons.

During the next 30 years, the excavators will dig a hole about 150 feet in depth and six square miles in area.

A conveyor system connected to the excavator carries the oil sands removed by the bucket-wheel away from the digging face.

Conveyors parallel to the face of the cut are periodically moved to a point within range of the excavator and its belt wagon, a mobile conveyor which discharges into the transportation system leading back to the separation plant.

About 4,500 tons or some 3,200 cubic yards of material are moved an hour. A full day's output is equivalent to 2,160 gondola cars each carrying 50 tons — enough to make up a railway train nearly 16 miles long.

#### RE-USE OF WATER

Water circulated through the separation plant is more than

20,000,000 gallons a day. A large portion of this water will be recovered from the tailings pond and re-used in the separation plant.

The volume of water circulated would be equivalent to the water consumption needs of a city of approximately 125,000 population such as Trenton, N.J., or Windsor, Ont.

The plant produces its own electricity, with a capacity of 65,000 kilowatts a day. This is enough to serve a residential town of 50,000 people.

#### QUANTITIES OF MATERIAL

There are 135 miles of piping in the plant, ranging from one-half inch to 54 inches in diameter. About 21 miles of this is underground and the total piping network is controlled by more than 100,000 valves.

There are more than 640 miles of electric cable and conduit in the plant.

About 70,000 cubic yards of concrete were used in construction along with 3,000 tons of reinforcing steel.

There are 14 major storage tanks incorporated into the GCOS plant with a combined capacity of one million barrels.

The connecting pumping load of all pumps in the plant is 34,000 horsepower.

Man-hours expended for design and construction of the plant totalled about ten million. About 2,500 engineering drawings were required.

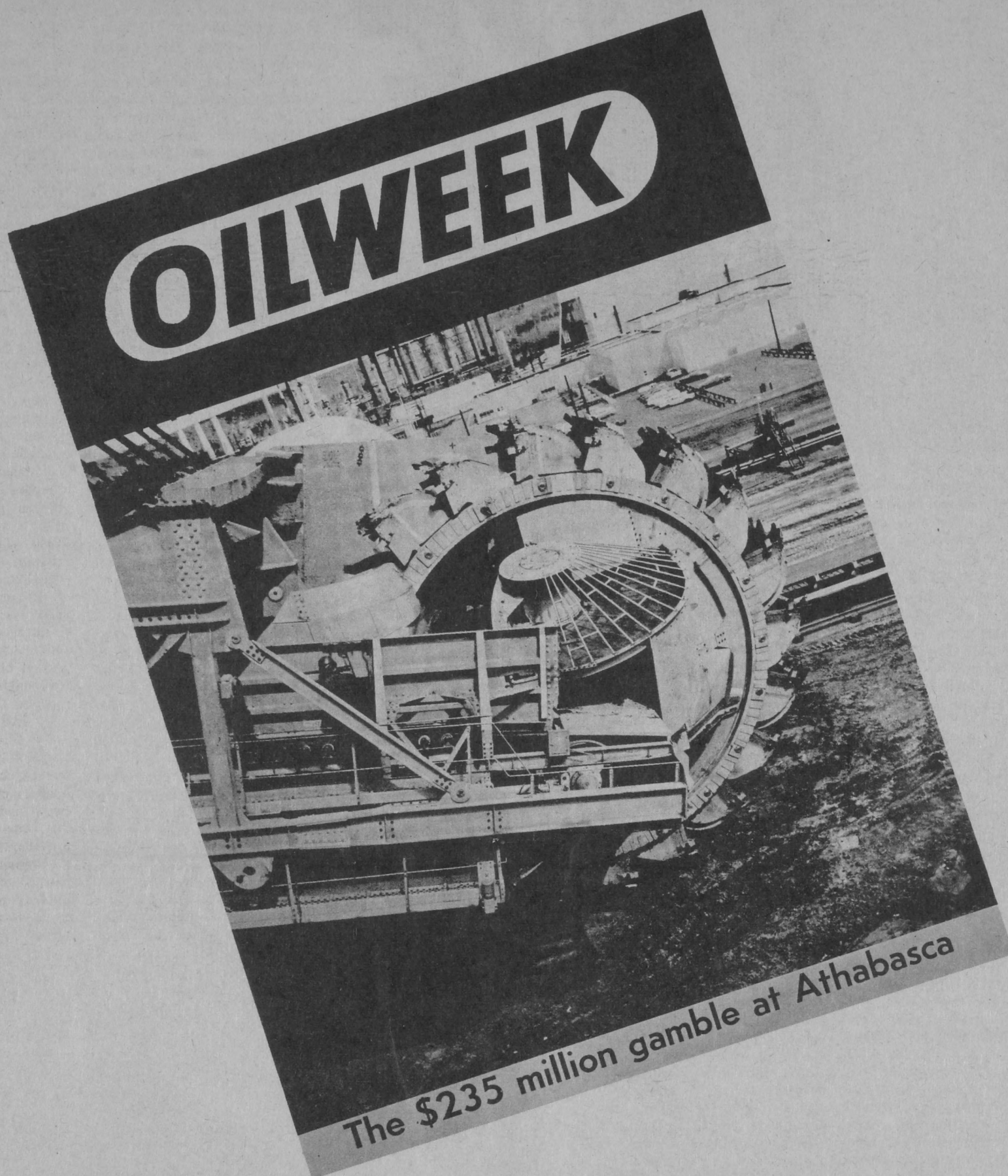
#### LARGEST PROJECT

The GCOS project, at its cost of \$235 million, has been described by the deputy mines minister of Alberta as the largest single undertaking wholly within the province at one time. It ranks among the big projects of the dominion, being almost three-fourths of Canada's cost (\$322 million) of the huge St. Lawrence Seaway development affecting several provinces.



Teeth of bucketwheel excavator dig into tar sands. Wheel revolves at 7.5 RPM and digs 20 tons of sand per revolution.





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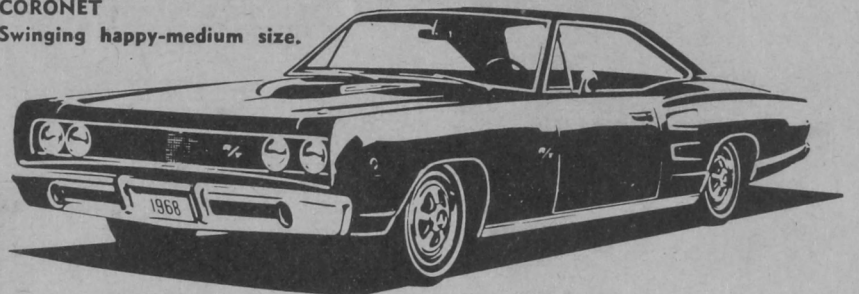


Chrysler. Make your move. Move up to Chrysler.

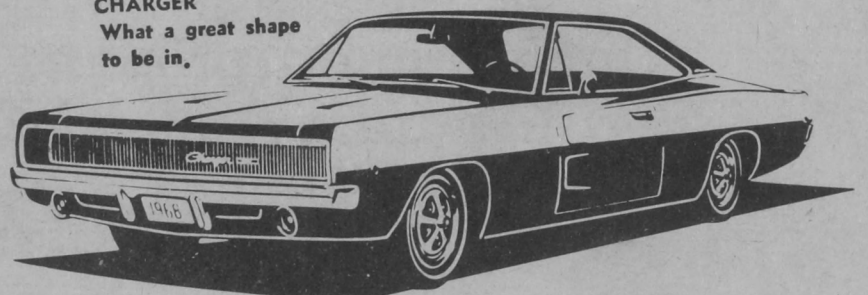
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can live with.



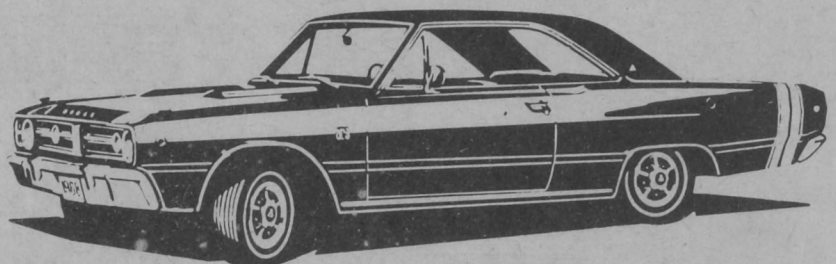
**CORONET**  
Swinging happy-medium size.



**CHARGER**  
What a great shape  
to be in.



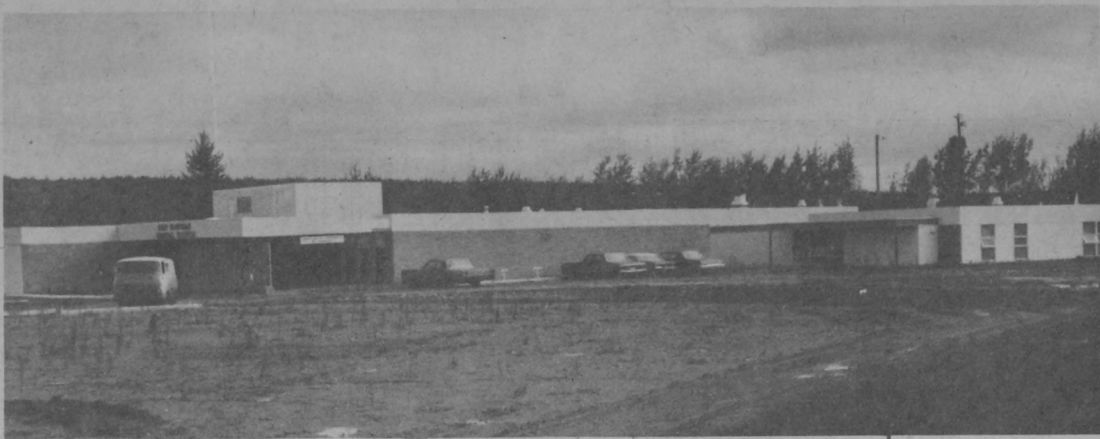
**DART**  
Canada's biggest compact.



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Best all-around  
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**Medical care:** Fort McMurray has a new hospital, shown above. A prominent western Canadian surgeon who recently visited the new Fort McMurray General hospital describes it as "one of Canada's finest where design and equipment are concerned."

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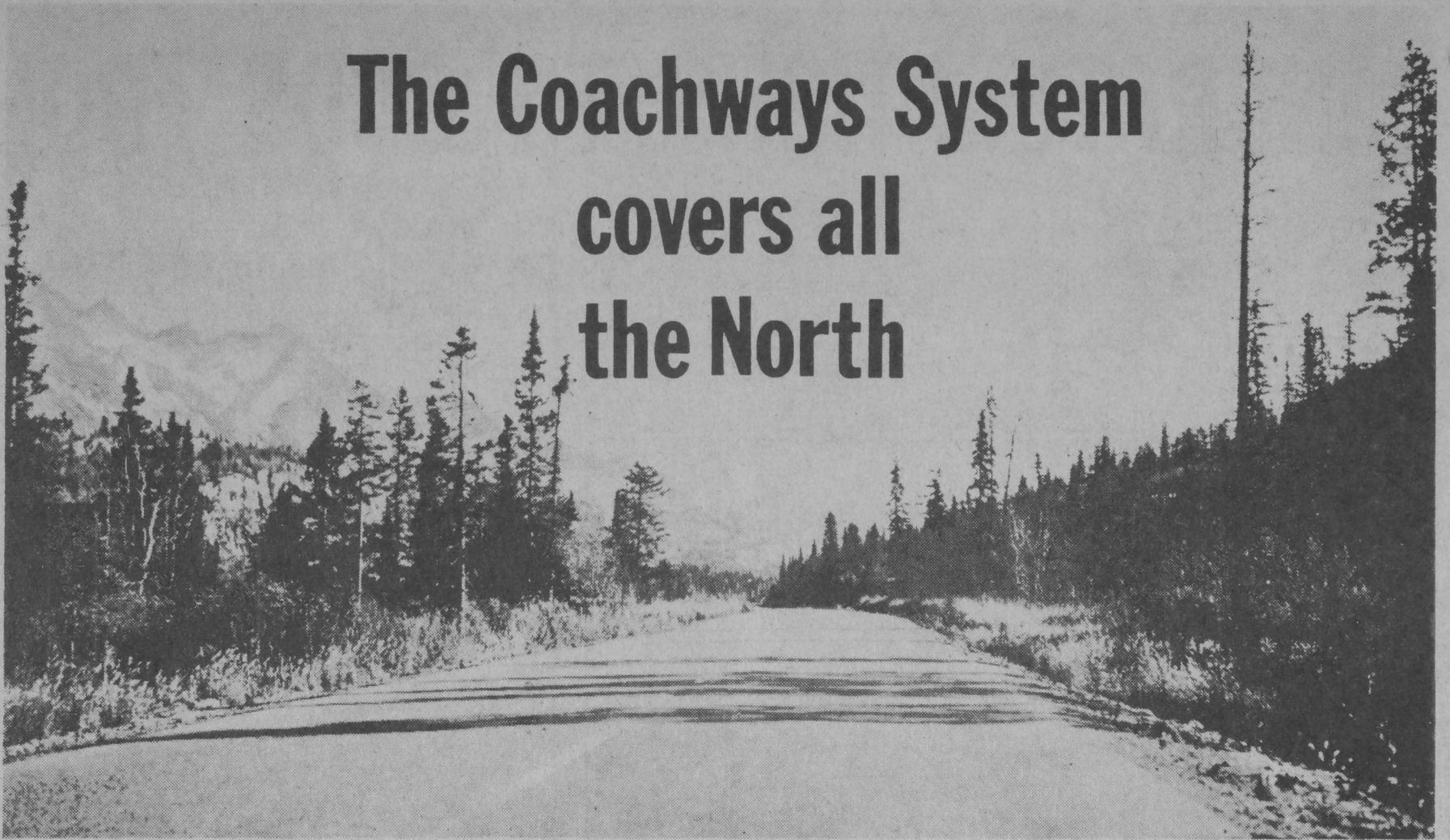
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